Indian POWs in Pakistani Jails

1890. SHRI BRATIN SENGUPTA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the question of release of 54 Indian POWs of 1971 Indo-Pak war languishing in Pakistani jails was raised by the Prime Minister with his counter-part during Agra Summit;

(b) whether the Pakistan Foreign Office has after verification, come out that there is no POWs and invited Indian families to visit Pakistan Jails; and

(c) if so, what steps have been taken by Government to check the veracity; of the Pakistani statement, so as to console the affected Indian families?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) yes, Sir.

(b) On 28th July, 2001, Government of Pakistan informed the Government that concerned authorities were physically rechecking the records of all prisons in Pakistan to ascertain if any missing Indian defence personnel from 1971 war was detained there. Subsequently, it informed that a search of all prisons in Pakistan was conducted on the directives of President Musharraf but no Indian POW was found detained there. It has offered to facilitate a visit to Paskistan by the relatives of POWs.

(c) Government has impressed upon Pakistan the need to continue with the efforts until the POWs are located and repatriated. Government has also had consultations with members of the families/ relatives of POWs in this regard.

Empowering Government to suspend passport

1891. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are proposing to bring a legislation which would empower Government to suspend passport or travel document of a person for a certain period;

(b) if so, the details of the legislation and its main features; and

(c) how would it help Government in tackling criminals?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) (a) and (b) The Passport (Amendment) Bill, 2001 which has been introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 22/11/2001, seeks to confer powers upon the concerned authorities to suspend a passport or travel document of a person indulging in criminal or anti-national activities to prevent him/her from leaving the country during the period when the action to revoke or impound his/her passport is initiated and when the passport is actually revoked or impounded. The passport or travel document would be temporarily suspended for a period of four weeks to enable completion of the procedure for impounding or revoking the passport which *inter alia* involves the issue of a show cause notice and filing of an appeal against the order of suspension.

(c) The Bill would suitably empower the concerned law enforcement as well as preventive agencies to initiate action to prevent any criminal or anti-national element from leaving the country even if he/she has a valid passport.

Appeal to United States against selected approach in fighting terrorism

1892. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have appealed to the United States against adopting a selected approach in fighting terrorism; and

(b) if so, what has been the response of the United States in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) (a) India has consistently conveyed to the international community that terrorism is a global problem that required a comprehensive international response against terrorism wherever it exist.

(b) On 05 October 2001, the White House Spokesman said at a Press Briefing that President Bush had condemned the terrorist attack